

null  
Diana T Fritz 08/27/2006 04:59:49 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

Cable  
Text:

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 05111

SIPDIS  
CXABU:

ACTION: ECON  
INFO: DEA P/M AMB DCM POL LEGAT

DISSEMINATION: ECON  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: CDA: MQINN  
DRAFTED: ECON: OJOHN  
CLEARED: ECON: ACURTIS, DEA: AHAMIDI, ICE: WWALLRAP, CG: KMORRIS

VZCZCADI819  
OO RUEHC RUEATRS RUEAWJA RUEABND  
DE RUEHAD #5111/01 3540948  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 200948Z DEC 05  
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2838  
INFO RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASH DC  
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 005111

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, INL  
JUSTICE FOR OIA, AFMLS, AND NDDS  
TREASURY FOR FINCEN  
DEA FOR OILS AND OFFICE OF DIVERSION CONTROL

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [SNAR](#)  
SUBJECT: UAE CONTRIBUTION TO 2005-2006 INCSR, NARCOTICS

REF: STATE 209558

#### I. Summary

11. Although not a narcotics-producing country, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is believed to be a transshipment point for traffickers moving illegal drugs from the major drug producing countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. Frequent reports of seizures of illegal drugs in the UAE over the past few years underscore this conclusion. Most seizures have been of hashish. There are several other factors that render the UAE a way station, including its proximity to major drug cultivation regions in Southwest Asia and a long (700 kilometer) coastline. High volumes of shipping render UAE ports vulnerable to exploitation by narcotics traffickers.

12. The UAE has taken several steps over the last year to enhance regional cooperation in the fight against illegal drugs. In September 2005 it opened a regional UN sub-office on drugs and crime. In February 2005, it signed an MOU with Iran on cooperation against the trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic drugs and their precursor chemicals. In September 2005, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) also established a country office in the UAE to enhance cooperation with UAE law enforcement authorities.

13. The UAE is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

#### II. Status of Country

14. A major regional financial center and hub for commercial shipping and trade, the UAE is believed to be a

transshipment point for illegal narcotics from the drug-cultivating regions of southwest Asia, to Europe, to Africa, and less significantly, to the United States. Western Europe is the principal market for these drugs, and Africa is becoming an increasingly prominent secondary market. Factors that contribute to the role of the UAE as a transshipment point are the emergence of Dubai and Sharjah as regional centers in the transportation of passengers and cargo, a porous land border with Oman, and the fact that a number of ports in the UAE are de facto "free ports" where transshipped cargo are not usually subject to inspection, as are other goods that enter the country.

¶5. Statistics show a 14.6 percent increase in the number of drug arrests between 2003 and 2004, with a total of 901 cases in 2004. Of these, 193 (or 21 percent) were for smuggling.

### III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2005

¶6. Policy Initiatives. The UAE continued to advance its national drug strategy based on intensifying security at the country's air and sea ports and patrols along the coastline, reducing demand for illegal drugs through educational campaigns, enforcing harsh penalties, and rehabilitating drug addicts. The UAE's Federal Supreme Court ruled in 2003 that authorities needed proof that drug use occurred in the UAE before they could prosecute users. A positive blood test is considered evidence of consumption, but not evidence of where the consumption took place.

¶7. Accomplishments. In May, UAE officials discussed ongoing talks with the Sultanate of Oman on ways to enhance cooperation on security issues, with a special emphasis on counter narcotics efforts. At that time, UAE law enforcement officials told the press that, in 2004, the UAE had successfully worked with other countries to have 53 people arrested abroad, of whom 41 were extradited to the UAE. In addition, police said that, during the same time frame, the UAE had arrested around 73 people at the request of other (mostly Arab) governments and extradited them.

¶8. In September of 2005, the UAE established a UN sub-office on Drugs and Crimes. The UAE government funded the estimated \$3 million cost of the office and contributed an additional \$50,000 to the UN counternarcotics program. The sub-office is responsible for coordinating national counternarcotics strategies and integrating them into the UN's comprehensive global program.

¶9. Law Enforcement Efforts. In 2004, UAE counternarcotics forces were active in 901 drug cases arresting a total of 1419 people. This was an increase on 2003, when officials arrested 1267 people in 786 cases. The largest number of arrestees was Emirati nationals (405) followed by Iranians (264) and Pakistanis (164). About 62% of the cases were for possession or consumption. In 2004, UAE officials seized 50 kg of opium, 91 kg of heroin, and 1777 kg of Hashish. In the first five months of 2005, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi announced that it had arrested 97 people in 68 cases.

¶10. In 2003, the UAE Ministry of Interior established a countrywide law enforcement database that is accessible to emirate-level police departments. This is a major step forward in coordinating narcotics-related information throughout the UAE.

¶11. Punishment for drug offences is severe. A 1995 law stipulates capital punishment as the penalty for drug trafficking. No executions for drug trafficking, however, have ever taken place, and sentences usually are commuted to life imprisonment.

¶12. UAE authorities continue to take seriously their responsibility to interdict drug smuggling and distribution. In May Dubai police announced that they had seized 200 kg of Hashish from two "Asians" who were attempting to sell it. This was the largest seizure of Hashish in Dubai to that

time.

¶13. UAE authorities also continue to cooperate with other countries to stop trafficking. This cooperation has resulted in several arrests. In one case, Dubai police, cooperating with Jordanian authorities, blocked an attempt to smuggle 2.7 million doses of a banned drug "Keptagon," which was being smuggled in 2 busses traveling from Eastern Europe to Dubai. In August, Abu Dhabi police cooperated with authorities in Kenya to track a ship transiting from an unnamed Asian country to the port of Mombassa. When the ship arrived in Kenya, police arrested the traffickers and seized the narcotics.

¶14. Corruption. UAE officials aggressively pursue and arrest individuals involved in illegal narcotics trafficking and/or abuse. The government of the UAE as a matter of policy does not encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances or the laundering of proceeds from drug transactions. Senior officials are not known to engage in or facilitate illicit production of these drugs or the laundering of proceeds from drug transactions either. There is no evidence that corruption - including narcotics related corruption - of public officials is a systemic problem.

¶15. Agreements and Treaties. The UAE is party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 UN Single Conventions as amended by the 1972 Protocol and the 1988 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances. The UAE has signed the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

¶16. In January 2005, the UAE signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Iran on cooperation against illicit traffic in narcotics and psychotropic substances and precursor used in their manufacture. In March 2005, the UAE cabinet approved the MOU.

¶17. Cultivation/Production. There is no evidence of any major drug cultivation and/or production in the UAE. Published records show that there were two cases of "planting" drugs in the Emirate of Ras Al-Khaima in 2004, with a total of three people arrested. There is anecdotal discussion of very small-scale drug manufacturing taking place in the UAE.

¶18. Drug flow/transit. Narcotics smuggling from south and southwest Asia continues to Europe and Africa and to a significantly lesser degree the United States via the UAE. Hashish, heroin, and opium shipments originate in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran and are smuggled in cargo containers, via small vessels and powerboats, and/or sent overland via Oman. According to published figures, Iranians and Pakistanis made up the largest number of non-UAE nationals arrested in drug cases in 2004 at 18.6% and 11.6% respectively. The UAE and Dubai in particular is a major regional transportation and shipping hub. High volumes of shipping render the UAE vulnerable to exploitation by narcotics traffickers.

¶19. Recognizing the need for increased monitoring at its commercial ports, airports, and borders, the UAE is making an effort to tighten inspections of cargo containers as well as passengers transiting the UAE. In December 2004, the Emirate of Dubai signed the Container Security Initiative (CSI) with the U.S. CSI inspectors arrived in Dubai in 2005 and are now inspecting containers destined for the U.S. Customs officials randomly search containers and follow-up leads on suspicious cargo.

¶20. Domestic Programs (demand reduction). A 2003 report noted that the majority of UAE drug users take their first dose abroad, primarily because of peer pressure. Statistics reveal that 75% of drug users in the UAE prefer hashish, 13 percent use heroin, while six percent use morphine. The report illustrates a clear relationship between drug abuse and level of education - 75 percent of arrested drug users in 2002 were high school graduates, but only two percent

were university graduates. While the data is a few years old, trends reported are still likely to be reflective of current societal patterns.

¶21. The focus of the UAE's domestic program is to reduce demand through public awareness campaigns directed at young people and the establishment of rehabilitation centers. In June 2005, the UAE issued a postage stamp to highlight the hazards of drugs as part of its awareness campaign. It also held a high-profile "Drug Awareness Week" with exhibits prominently set up in all of the local shopping malls. UAE officials believe that adherence to Muslim religious morals and severe prison sentences imposed on individuals convicted of drug offenses effectively deter narcotics abuse. An affluent country, the UAE has established an extensive treatment and rehabilitation program for its citizens. There is a rehab center in Abu Dhabi, two in Dubai, and one each in Ajman and Sharjah for those identified as addicts. In accordance with federal law, UAE nationals who are addicted can present themselves to the police or a rehabilitation center and be exempted from criminal prosecution. Those nationals who do not turn themselves in to local authorities are referred to the legal system for prosecution. Third-country nationals or "guest workers" who make up approximately 80% of the population, generally receive prison sentences upon conviction of narcotics offenses and are deported upon completing their sentences.

¶22. Most UAE nationals arrested on drug charges are placed in one of the UAE's drug treatment programs. They undergo a two-year drug rehabilitation program, which includes family counseling/therapy.

#### IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

¶23. DEA Administrator Karen Tandy visited the UAE in July 2005 to enhance anti narcotics cooperation with the UAE. During her visit, she proposed and the UAE accepted establishing a DEA presence in the UAE to work closely with UAE authorities. The first DEA office was established in September 2005 in Dubai. A second office will be established in Abu Dhabi in 2006.

¶24. The UAE and the U.S have held the first round of discussions on MLAT and extradition treaties, which when completed would facilitate the exchange of information related to drug and financial crime. The USG will continue to encourage the UAE to focus enforcement efforts on dismantling major trafficking organizations and prosecuting their leaders and to enact export control and border security legislation.

QUINN